



X-MEN Special Edition

Genre : Sci-Fi Director : Bryan Singer Starring : Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Hugh Jackman, Famke Janssen Rated : M15+ Run Time : 100 mins Made : 2000
Distributor : 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment

F: DL | A: DD 5.1 | V: W/S 16:9 | R: 2.35:1 | L: English | S: Cz, Dan, Fin, Hin, Hun, Ice, Nor, Pol, Por, Sw, HI Eng

THE FILM: Wolverine. Cyclops. Storm. Rogue. Magneto. They're all here in the knockout film version of the popular Marvel comic.

Humanity enters the next phase of its evolution with the appearance of a breed of super-powered mutants. They can walk through walls, steal another's life force through physical contact, or influence the thoughts of others.

One such mutant is Magneto, a concentration camp survivor whose magnetic presence makes him a formidable force. Magneto believes a war is brewing between humans and his kind, fuelled by the propaganda of a bigoted right-wing Senator who sees mutants as a potential threat to mankind.

Enter Logan, a burly mutant loner with a lethal set of "adamantium" metal claws, who's whisked from a confrontation with Magneto's henchmen into Professor Charles Xavier's school for the genetically gifted. Here, mutants are taught to understand and refine their powers to defend mankind. To become "X-Men"...

Created by Marvel Comics alumni Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the "Uncanny" X-Men joined the superhero pantheon back in 1963 and has since enjoyed one of the largest global readerships of the Marvel line - a universe whose other resident champions include The Fantastic Four, Spider-Man and The Incredible Hulk.

Bringing the X-Men to the screen as a live action blockbuster was the brainchild of producer Lauren Shuler Donner (wife of *Superman* director Richard Donner). Bryan Singer, whose *The Usual Suspects* showcased his storytelling prowess and knack with characters and actors, was signed on to direct. Confessing a lack of familiarity

with the source material, the comic book fraternity were naturally concerned that Singer could not do their beloved heroes justice, but allowing a fan to direct a comic-to-screen adaptation is not always a good idea - look what self confessed 2000AD addict Danny Cannon did to *Judge Dredd*.

However, with executive producer and resident fanboy Tom DeSanto on hand to coach the director on the finer points of X-Men lore and the project given the nod from Marvel guru Stan Lee, the \$75 million production appeared to be in capable hands. With the superhero's reputation on film repeatedly sullied by the likes of Joel Schumacher's *Batman and Robin* and fellow turkeys *The Phantom* and *Spawn*, its ultimate fate rested on the success of *X-Men*. Following much anticipation and apprehension, *X-Men* was unleashed to resounding approval from both die-hard fans and the movie going public, a blockbuster that has guaranteed at least two sequels.

X-Men's success is a combination of Singer's deadly earnest approach to the material, its topical themes of intolerance and acceptance, some slick production design and a drop dead gorgeous cast. The X-Men are: *Goldeneye* bad girl Famke Janssen as Dr. Jean Grey (aka Marvel Girl), model Rebecca Romijn-Stamos (clad in skimpy blue prosthetics) as the chameleonic Mystique, teen hunk James Marsden (*Gossip*) as Cyclops, a peroxided Halle Berry whipping up a Storm, Oscar® winner Anna Paquin (*The Piano*) is the cute and sensitive Rogue, and rugged



Director Bryan Singer interviewed on doing the comic justice



Hugh Jackman screen test



R4 REVIEWS

Aussie rising star Hugh Jackman brings the gruff and enigmatic Wolverine to berserk life. Add to this the distinguished presence of the great

mutants is intercut with cast and crew comments, behind-the-scenes footage of Rebecca Romijn-Stamos's eight hour make-up blues, and feedback

The best comic to film translation since Tim Burton and Batman got together

Ian McKellan as Magneto, and Captain Picard himself - Patrick Stewart - as Professor Xavier, wheelchair bound mutant saviour, how could it be anything but superb?

THE MENU: Enter the Cerebro chamber and X marks the spot for scene selections, special features, languages and PLAY option.

THE EXTRAS: Likely to be the first stop for fans, the six **deleted scenes** are mostly alternate/extended sequences that offer further character interplay between Rogue and Bobby, Xavier and Jean Grey. These missing moments can be accessed as separate selections or cut back into the film. Select the option **Extended Branching Version** to insert the unfinished scenes and alternative edits back into the feature. Good in theory but a tad disruptive given most of the alternate/extended takes are subsequently duplicated within the finished product. At best this feature places the deleted footage within the context of the film, but it's best avoided and the extra bits viewed separately.

There's no "making-of" as such but rather a decent 22 min promotional mockumentary like the similar phone news bulletin included with ID4. **The Mutant Watch**, featuring Bruce Davison's Senator Kelly in his crusade to encourage mandatory registration for all

from Bryan Singer and Marvel master Stan Lee. A further 6 min promotional **featurette** is a mutant round-up that serves as a snappy intro to the X-Men universe.

It's disappointing to report there's no audio commentary and the brief series of **Bryan Singer**



Making up Mystique.
Model Rebecca Romijn-Stamos gets the blues

interviews with Charlie Rose is no compensation. Conducted a week after he completed the film, the youthful director reflects on the challenges of shooting a big studio film, doing the the comic justice

and winning the trust of his actors.

A bonus for us Aussies is the **Hugh Jackman screen test** opposite Anna Paquin. Let's face it... Dougray Scott was never gonna be Wolverine.

Concept art for character and production design revealing the evolving look of *X-Men* is collected in the **Art Gallery**. One of the disc's two hidden **Easter Eggs** can be found on this sub-menu screen. Click right to highlight the Wolverine dog-tags for preliminary ILM designs of unused characters: The Beast and Blob, who are now likely to turn up in the sequels. The other hidden bonus can be found on the Special Features menu. Click left onto the chess piece for an on-set Spider-Man gag.

An **Animatics** feature offers animated 3D storyboards for the train station and Statue of Liberty battles.

Promotional materials include a trio of **trailers** and **TV spots**, a soundtrack plug and cross promo for the Fox animated feature *Titan A.E.*

BEST BIT:
Bruce Davison goes to water.

VERDICT:

The best comic to film translation since Tim Burton and Batman got together. Lovingly reproduced in an essential 2.35:1 widescreen transfer with a busy directional sound mix that sends Xavier's telepathic whispering right inside your head, this is a simply X-cellent presentation. Previously available for rental in a movie-only edition, this new retail version is an extras rich offering packaged in a slick, limited edition slipcase certain to delight fans.

SIMPLY MARVEL-OUS

The colourful screen life of Marvel Comic's finest champions, from the animated to the anticipated.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK



Dossier: A dose of gamma radiation transforms mild mannered nuclear physicist David Banner into a big green brute when stressed.

Screen History: The Hulk remains the most prolific Marvel small screen presence to date. From a 1966 animated series to five seasons of TV adventures - including three telemovies and

two pilots - the raging green giant also remains the career highlight for *Pumping Iron*'s other half Lou Ferrigno. Ironically fellow gym buddy Arnold Schwarzenegger was originally considered for the role but was deemed "too short".

Other characters from the Marvel universe were prone to cameo in the Hulk TV movies - *The Incredible Hulk Returns* features "God of Thunder" Thor, while *Trial of the Incredible Hulk* boasts guest appearances by Daredevil and crime-lord The Kingpin.

The Hollywood rumour mill reports a big screen version of the Hulk is being prepped with none other than *Crouching Tiger...* master Ang Lee set to direct a totally CG character.

THE FANTASTIC FOUR



Dossier: Cosmic rays bestow fantastic powers upon four astronauts. Reed Richards becomes the elastic Mr. Fantastic, Sue Storm the Invisible Girl, sibling Johnny Storm fires up as The Human Torch ("Flame on") and Ben Grimm, becomes a rocky looking Thing.

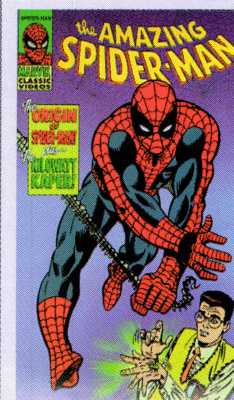
Screen History: The unstoppable Roger Corman produced a

Fantastic Four feature back in 1994 that was so dire (even by his standards) it made *Batman* and *Robin* look like a Tim Burton film. Star Alex Hyde White was a real stretch as Reed Richards and *Boy Who Could Fly* Jay Underwood failed to ignite as Johnny Storm. Marvel Comic's decreed it never see the light of a projector and shelved the whole sorry project.

Bootleg copies circulate at comic conventions for the really desperate, however next year 'Four' fans will see their heroes in a big budget blockbuster from 20th Century Fox, written and produced by Chris Columbus, that promises to remain faithful to the source material.

Where have we heard that one before?

SPIDER-MAN



Dossier: Student Peter Parker is bitten by an irradiated spider and becomes a sticky character with certain arachnid traits, including neat web slinging abilities, superhuman reflexes and (of course) incredible strength.

Screen History: The obligatory animated TV adventures were followed by a cheesy live-action series *The*

Amazing Spider-Man (1978) starring Nicholas Hammond as Peter Parker, and spin-off telemovie *Spiderman Strikes Back*

A new Spider-Man feature has been an on-again-off-again Hollywood property for many years. Originally attached to self proclaimed "King of the World" James Cameron, lots of legal red tape significantly delayed the project which has now wound up in the hands of *Evil Dead* director Sam Raimi. Tobey Maguire (*Pleasantville*) is Peter Parker, the ubiquitous Kirsten Dunst is Mary Jane Watson, and Willem Dafoe likely to carve the ham as resident nemesis The Green Goblin. With the talented Raimi on board this will either be something special indeed or *Darkman!* ETA May 2002.

**X-MEN :
THE CHAMELEON**REBECCA ROMIJN-STAMOS
as MYSTIQUE

Unlike Halle Berry, who had special effects for her look, you really did have to get an all-over blue paint job, didn't you?

RRS: Yes, I should have cried as loudly as Halle did! It was really, really horrible. It was an eight-hour make-up job every day. I also had to wear full eye, yellow contact lenses. My eyes were also extremely sensitive to the lenses and I had to wear two pairs because the yellow ones were painted that colour, and they would scratch my cornea, so I had to wear another set underneath to bandage between the yellow contacts and my eyes. I could only wear them for up to an hour a day. There was an eye doctor on the film set and she would time it. She would say, 'All right Bryan Singer you've got 10 minutes left, then they are coming out!' So I would only wear those lenses for the close-ups.

At what point did Bryan Singer tell you that for most of the *X-Men* you'd only be wearing quite a minimalist blue bikini?

RRS: I knew from the start. They had shown me drawings of what they had in mind for Mystique. On paper, I looked at it and thought it was a really beautiful costume. In the end, that's what got me through the whole process. I really thought it was a beautifully designed work of art, the costume itself. The execution of it I wasn't really ready for - it was much easier on paper.

Is it true that 24 hours before you got painted you couldn't even have a glass of wine with your meal?

RRS: There were certain things that would affect my body chemistry. If I flew in the night before, my skin would produce that much more oil and the prosthetics wouldn't stick as well. If I drank alcohol, the prosthetics wouldn't stick as well either. If I took a sauna the previous night, or even if my trailer was too warm...there would be a trouble. So I was doing everything to keep the prosthetics sticking.

What did you know about the X-Men comics?

RRS: I knew nothing, just that it was a really famous comic book and had tons of fans. I did not know what it was about or why everybody was so stuck on it.



DUTCH TREAT

The release of *X-Men* on DVD is a good excuse to turn the spotlight on former model turned actress Famke Janssen. From the glossy pages of *Elle* to kicking James Bond's arse, Famke's numerous genre credits reveal she's no stranger to the fantastique...

Her name might mean "little girl" in Frisian but there's nothing diminutive about Dutch born actress Famke Janssen. Tall, talented, smart, multilingual and a literary sophisticate, Famke is that irresistible combination of brains and beauty who began her career as a professional model, reclining in tasteful spreads for "Victoria's Secret" lingerie before making her film debut opposite Jeff Goldblum in the nondescript drama *Fathers and Sons* (1992).

Television appearances followed with guest spots on *Star Trek The Next Generation* where she was cast as "The Perfect Mate" for *X-Men* co-star Patrick Stewart, and *Melrose Place* where she played a hooker in the episode "Michael's Game". And while we're on the subject of TV, those unlucky enough to have caught recent episodes of *Ally MacBeal* will have spotted Famke in a couple of guest appearances as Robert Downey Jr's ex.

Famke's first major film role was in Clive Barker's *Lord of Illusions* (1995), as the wife of a David Copperfield type who'd sold out to the forces of

darkness, before moving on to the big time as Xenia Onatopp, the villainous Soviet assassin with a pair of lethal thighs in Pierce Brosnan's Bond debut *Goldeneye* (1995). Following her scene-stealing role as Xenia, it appeared that a new Hollywood star was on the rise. However, not wanting to be typecast as a femme fatale, and despite her career philosophy ("I would rather not work than play in a movie nobody watches"), Famke retreated into the indie film scene and nothing roles in the showbiz satire *Dead Girl* (1996), *City of Industry* (1997) with Harvey Keitel, and the lame auto heist movie *R.P.M.* (1997) as a sexy carjacker. Move over Angelina Jolie!

1998 was to become the year of Famke. Following bit parts in *Rounders*, *The Gingerbread Man*, Woody Allen's *Celebrity*, and *The Adventures of Sebastian Cole* (directed by then husband Todd Williams), Famke would return to the genre that launched her career and became a recognisable face to the horror and sci-fi contingent.

Deep Rising, directed by Stephen Sommers (*The Mummy*), found her in the supporting role of an

unscrupulous jewel thief trapped aboard a luxury liner that's attacked by a giant mutant octopus. Next up she was one of *The Faculty*, the meek Miss Burke who's transformed into a virile vixen by alien parasites and seduces *Pearl Harbor* boy Josh Hartnett. And in William Malone's remake of *House on Haunted Hill* (1999) she can be seen as the estranged wife of Geoffrey Rush who stages her birthday bash in the eponymous mansion.

Those wanting more of Famke got just that in the he-said-she-said romantic comedy *Love & Sex* (2000), opposite granite-jawed writer/director Jon Favreau (*Swingers*) who promptly cast his lovely co-star in his latest film *Made* (2001) alongside Puff Daddy and Peter Falk!

Famke's latest, the upcoming thriller *Don't Say A Word* (2001) unites her with none other than Michael Douglas. Look out Catherine Zeta-Jones! No, we didn't forget *X-Men*. On the subject of her character, the telepath Jean Grey, we'll let Famke have the last word: "We've always been ready for female superheroes, because women want to be them and men want to do them!"

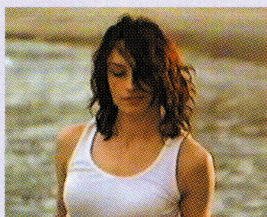
Fantastic Famke...



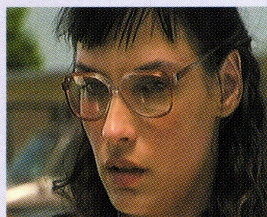
Goldeneye



Lord of Illusions



Deep Rising



The Faculty



House on Haunted Hill

X-MEN : THE DOCTOR

FAMKE JANSSEN as JEAN GREY

Why do you think that *X-Men* has been such a smash-hit movie?

FAMKE JANSSEN: I would think for a couple of different reasons. The comic book has been around for about 40 years and has been incredibly successful. It also appeals to people because they can relate to being an outsider. It deals with prejudice. It's also very entertaining and everybody wants to be a super hero. On top of that, the lack of big blockbusters in a couple of years helped. Many films have been special effects-driven, but they forgot about character and story line, so *X-Men* has all of that to offer.

Were you aware of the comics before you were offered this movie?

FJ: No, I don't think they were a big deal in Holland where I lived. But I don't think you need to be a fan of the comics because the film crosses over really well to a mainstream audience.

You say most of us would like to be a super hero. Who would you choose?

FJ: I don't know super heroes, so I am not really familiar with all the things that they can do. But I'm sure that the potential is limitless. I would want to be the most greedy super hero of all time. I'd want to have it all, to be able to do everything. A Superwoman!

What did you like about the character you play in *X-Men*?

FJ: The thing that really appealed to me about her was that she really can't control her powers yet. That would be me if I was given all these powers, I would just want to try them all out.

What are your hopes for any sequel that might be made?

FJ: I don't like repeating myself on screen. So if Jean Grey was to come back in the same capacity, I would not be as thrilled as if I got to play Dark Phoenix, the character that she becomes in the comics. But who knows what they might do in any sequel. There are a lot of different *X-Men* characters and storyline possibilities.

Was there a point during filming when it dawned on you that this was going to be a box office smash?

FJ: I did not know that this was going to be a hit. I thought it was going to be a good and interesting movie, but I did not realise that it was going to cross over in the way that it has done.

"I would want to be the most greedy super hero of all time. I'd want to have it all, to be able to do everything. A Superwoman!"





"There is a longing to do the extraordinary and the outrageous, and a movie like this, I think, satisfies that longing"

X-MEN : THE SAVIOUR

PATRICK STEWART as PROFESSOR XAVIER

Why are big screen superheroes back in vogue?

PS: What has happened with this particular movie is interesting because Bryan Singer has set it in a very real and recognisable world, the world of today. Our superheroes themselves, the genetic mutants, are, in their ordinary appearance, perfectly normal human beings and yet, in an instant they are transformed into these creatures who have super powers. I think it's a childhood quality, the way as children we invented games for ourselves and gave ourselves powers which no child could possibly have. There is a longing to do the extraordinary and the outrageous, and a movie like this, I think, satisfies that longing. In this case, it is done with good taste and fundamentally serious intent, which gives the film substance. Bryan always wanted to make a serious movie, which turned out to be massively entertaining as well.

Don't you think that it is a real coup that *X-Men's* two protagonists are classically trained actors like Sir Ian McKellen and yourself?

PS: There are quality actors throughout the movie, it just so happens that Ian and I have a very similar background, years and years of theatre work, with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, playing all those kings and princes and tyrants. They are the two dominating figures in the film and it is not an accident, I'm sure, that Bryan, who had worked with Ian before on *Apt Pupil* and was aware of a lot of the things I had done, had the intention of wanting actors with that kind of background. He wanted to bring authority to those two roles because everything that happens in the film only happens because of the particular

dynamic that exists there. It is almost as if one individual has been split. We always thought of them as the good twin and the evil twin. But there is not just our theatre background that is similar, Ian and I are both Northerners, we come from either side of the Pennines, we are almost the same age, Ian happened to have marginally better education. So we have a lot in common.

Are you contracted for an *X-Men* sequel?

PS: We are contracted for two movies. I don't think anybody ever thought of it as a sequel in those days because we knew it would all depend on the success of this film. Actually the first film feels like a trailer. There are so many characters that we really only get to meet them briefly, like introductions. So it is as though this film is setting up the premise and suggesting where it might go. Certainly the last scene with Magneto and Professor Xavier without any doubt seems to nudge us towards the idea of a sequel.

Which of the *X-Men* super powers would you want?

PS: I'm not too attracted by the powers that my character has, nor indeed those of Magneto. I think I'd like a combination of the physicality of Sabretooth and Toad, and the athletic beauty of what Mystique does.

Will you be boldly going again with another *Star Trek* movie?

PS: There seems to be a very grave danger that we might. There is a 28-page story, written by John Logan who did a wonderful job with *Gladiator*. This is the first time that a non-*Star Trek* writer has been brought in to develop a story and negotiations are underway, so watch this space.



X-MEN : THE DIRECTOR

BRYAN SINGER

You had to turn *X-Men* around much faster than you originally envisaged, didn't you?

BS: We were rehearsing a stunt one day when the head of the studio, who was passing by, said 'Congratulations, you have been moved to the summer.' At first, I thought that meant I had an extra six months to get the movie ready. At that time we had not cast a lead actor yet, so I imagined that would give us the extra time we needed. Then I was told that the studio head meant summer 2000 not 2001. And I wondered if that could be done? But it was not a bad idea, the date was a good opening date for us, it just made everything a challenge. I hurt my back when I was demonstrating something to Hugh Jackman. It was very cumbersome, the sort of thing where you want to call in insurance and shut down for a week so that I could rest. But then we would have missed the release date. So I carried on working. I was not debilitated, I just had pain while I was working. It was something that needed rest to get better, but there was no room for that. Fortunately it wasn't serious.

Originally you were going to have Dougray Scott in the role of Wolverine, what happened?

BS: He was in Australia, making *Mission Impossible 2* and they went over time. At first I thought that it would be a relief. We have lost our lead actor, so we have to shut down and go at Christmas or the following summer. Then I met Hugh Jackman, who was available, and I thought he could be the guy to play Wolverine. Dougray Scott is a wonderful actor, but I couldn't be more pleased with Hugh and the way things worked out. For me it was, once again, an opportunity to have a not very well known actor at the centre of one of my films. I had that pleasure with Kevin Spacey in *The Usual Suspects*. The Wolverine character is very much a mystery - to the audience and himself - and having a not very well known actor in that role was an advantage.

It seems like a stroke of genius to cast Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart opposite each other?

BS: It is my second film with Ian - the first was *Apt Pupil* - and I have always wanted to work with Patrick, so the casting was natural. It anchors the film to have them in their roles. It gives it a level of elegance and grounding. It is as if these characters are brothers, cut from the same cloth, who have chosen different paths.

How aware were you of the X-Men comics, were you a fan?

BS: No, I had never read comics growing up. So for me, it was three and half or four years ago that I was first educated as to what *X-Men* was. I found it immensely fascinating because I have always been a huge fan of science fiction fantasy...literature, films and television. So when I discovered that this comic book had this depth to it, this philosophy and all these things going on, these wonderful characters, I thought this would be a way into this genre. And over the past four years or so I have become a fan.

Why do you think that we are witnessing the return of super heroes?

BS: Projects like Superman and The Incredible Hulk have always been in the development stage. They are just films that are really challenging to do and to do right. People are often intimidated by them and it is a case of getting the scripts right. When I was asked why I had been chosen to do *X-Men*, I say that I didn't think anybody else was that interested and if they knew how difficult this film was to do! It is a tough one, like trying to make Batman, Superman, Spiderman all in one...plus nine more characters. The prospect to do these movies is exciting, but they are hard to do well.

Will you be at the helm of the *X-Men* sequel?

BS: We haven't even started talking about it. But if the story and the situation is right, I'm sure it will be possible.